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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: SENEGAL: ELECTION SITREP 4: SOME REASONS WHY WADE
WON IN FIRST ROUND

REF: DAKAR 0437 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROY L. WHITAKER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) President Wade's allies and minions may have tried hard to manipulate Sunday's election, but as it turned out, they hardly needed to make the effort. Wade outclassed the competition by a comfortable margin, in highly competitive areas such as Kaolack and Saint Louis and even where he was considered extremely weak, as in Tambacounda. The opposition is changing its tone as results become clear, calling the outcome "illogical" or "unacceptable," but no longer insisting on a second round. We examine reasons why Wade won convincingly, especially voters' ongoing distrust of the once-ruling Socialists, and Wade's monopoly on the politics of hope. END SUMMARY.

HATRED TRUMPS DISAPPOINTMENT

2. (C) Many Senegalese, including perhaps especially those who voted for Wade in 2000, are disappointed in his presidential performance. They know he has not created many jobs, nor resolved the Casamance rebellion, nor even completed &grands travaux or projects he wants to leave as a legacy. Furthermore, social and economic troubles of the last year, clandestine emigration to Europe, and failure even to provide quick or effective relief for Dakar zones flooded in 2005 have persuaded many that Wade is a clever politician but incompetent manager and distracted leader.

3. (C) Wade, though, had one huge thing going for him: he is not a Socialist. The Socialist Party, in power for 40 years, was deeply detested in its last decade in power. The unpopular President Abdou Diouf presided over steady economic decline, while the even more unpopular Ousmane Tanor Dieng was seen as the actual manager of economic stagnation, social instability, and arrogance. Even though Tanor has tried to reform and modernize, his Socialist Party still seems sclerotic while its other leaders are often dismissed as "dinosaurs." Voters did not welcome the idea of a Socialist return.

A TRIUMPH OF HOPE OVER EXPERIENCE

4. (C) As in 2000, and although he has run the Government for seven years, Wade successfully associated himself with the slogan "SOPI" or "Change." The "popular quarters" or slums of Dakar -- Pikine, Guediawaye and Parcelles Assainies -- gave Wade his winning majority in 2000, but he has done little for them since. They remain crowded, without jobs, poorly served by infrastructure, poor and often ignored. For example, Wade specifically promised to provide an adequate

pumping station after the 2005 floods, and was roundly condemned for not starting the station's construction until after the start of the 2006 rainy season.

15. (C) On Sunday, slum dwellers again gave Wade their votes.

Construction of massive highway interchanges may well have caused traffic nightmares, above all for those who cannot afford cars, but Wade promises that it is all a part of his effort, "together ... to build Senegal." Another of his slogans, in Wolof, simply says "I'll deliver," while another, adjacent to the octogenarian president's photo promises "the best is yet to come!" His emphasis is always on the future, on change, on hope of improvement, and on including every Senegalese, no matter how poverty-stricken or isolated, in the national effort. Despite disenchantment with his first years, Wade still incarnates aspiration.

SOCIALIST TURNCOATS DELIVER

16. (C) Wade split his Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) and drove many long-time loyalists into ex-Prime Minister Idrissa Seck's camp, by co-opting "transhumants" or ex-Socialist turncoats and giving them positions of power and potential wealth in the PDS. Sunday's election appears to have proved the staying power of patron-client politics, since many or most of these transhumants delivered their followers to Wade.

The most notable examples of this were in the North: Ex-Socialist spokesman Ibrahima Agne delivered a huge majority for Wade in Matam, while the ex-Socialist mayor of Podor cut deeply into a vote which many thought was totally controlled by Tanor's campaign manager Aissata Tall Sall. In eastern Tambacounda, meanwhile, despite farmers' deep unhappiness bordering on despair, Wade equaled or narrowly beat the combined opposition in most or all districts.

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WADE'S BROTHERHOOD STAYS UNITED

17. (C) There was much talk over the last two years about Mouride Brotherhood unhappiness with Wade, charges that the Socialists had made inroads with the current Khalif's heirs apparent, and even charges that Wade was "more French than Mouride." There were, also, serious splits among key Wade backers in the key Mouride towns of Djourbel and Darou Mousty. Potentially very damaging as well were complaints by the Khalif, leaked somehow to the media, that Wade had redirected elsewhere construction funds he had promised for the Mouride capital of Touba. Wade resolved the last problem in just the last few months by hurriedly starting construction on a potholed section of the Dakar-Touba road. On Sunday, the Mourides rallied around Wade as one of their own, giving him a reported 80 percent majority in Touba and a comparable win in nearby Djourbel.

CHARISMA COUNTS

18. (C) Wade is an intriguing, perplexing, sometimes weirdly unpredictable, funny, avuncular, frustrating, contradictory and always watchable political personality. His opponents, meanwhile, include a gray apparatchik (Tanor), an equally gray international diplomat and banker (Moustapha Niasse), and a somewhat more vivid but often dour and straight-laced-sounding Idrissa Seck. Charisma-wise, there was simply no competition: Wade draws the camera, his rivals don't.

THE YOUNG SEEK REPRESENTATION, AND WOMEN TOO

19. (C) At least three candidates pitched appeals to young people. One, Talla Sylla, despite an impressive brain trust of young men and women, extensive networking in the religious community and excellent press coverage, recognized publicly on Monday that he had failed to gain an appreciable vote. Idrissa Seck pitched his campaign ("jobs and food") to the slums' unemployed young and succeeded, if initial returns are

any indication, in sharing their vote with Wade. Yet young people still look up to Wade as representative of the dispossessed outsider, and appear to have voted heavily for him.

¶10. (C) Women also appear to have favored Wade and to have voted heavily. Our election monitors throughout the country observed that women dominated the voting booth later in the day, and one woman told us "of course we come late. We have to prepare tieboudienne (spicy fish, a national dish) in the morning." Despite considerable increases in the prices of the "panier de la menagere" or market basket over the last few years, these women appear to have gone overwhelmingly for Wade. In examining the reasons for this, Wade represents hope, has expanded women's rights, improved their tax treatment, and has promised parity on PDS candidate lists for the National Assembly.

WADE IS NOT WITHOUT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

¶11. (C) Senegalese take pride in being political hypochondriacs, in striking the most pessimistic note in friendly conversation. They find plenty to fret about in Wade's performance, though when pressed they will admit that Wade has managed to accomplish some things his Socialist predecessors left undone or never tried. These include greatly enhanced spending on education and health; more girls in school; new or rebuilt village schools; nominal cost kindergartens to give poor and village children an educational head-start; village lighting; and some new roads in previously underserved areas (for example: Tambacounda-Khedougou, Ziguinchor to the Gambian border, and, most recently, Kolda to the Gambian border and to Sedhiou). Construction of new Dakar interchanges may have gummed up urban mobility for months, but even though not yet completed they already look impressive and show evidence, as we hear often, that "the old man is at least doing something. The country's moving."

MONEY AND MANIPULATION CERTAINLY DIDN'T HURT

¶12. (C) Wade spent massive amounts of money on this election, both from his political accounts and from the state coffers. He recently raised salaries for military, police, teachers and other civil servants and gained their gratitude and that of the extended families they support. Meanwhile, Wade was assuring the support or at least the benign neutrality of national level religious leaders, building roads to Touba for the Mourides, and contributing to a new

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cultural center in Tivouane for the Tidjanes. For local marabouts, there was, by many accounts, the more immediate pecuniary benefit of a money pouch or some folded bills. In terms of party organization, the PDS had more funds, and cars, to shuttle supporters from remote or difficult-to-access areas to registration office to pick up voter cards and to the polls to vote.

¶13. (C) There have been often solidly-based allegations that the Interior Ministry manipulated introduction of new electoral procedures in Wade's favor. These allegations include: making it harder for rural, presumably pro-Socialist voters to register; suppression of the vote to enable the PDS to constitute a majority rather than simply a plurality; elimination of registration cards that one could stamp and non-provision of indelible ink, supposedly to make fraud easier; etc., etc. To the extent these charges are true, it is clear that Interior Ministry contributed to PDS success at least as much as to the efficiency of the democratic system.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) Voters awarded their trust in the future to an 80-plus year old, and their hope for dramatic change in the way the country is run to the man who has been in power for

seven years. They overlooked the fact that during his seven years in office he allowed his broad-based coalition to shrink and that he has not delivered either on his specific commitments or on the overarching promise that he represented for a better government and a better life. Up until the morning of election day, they voiced their deep discontent with the man, his family, his close and allegedly corrupt and power-hungry inner circle, and his party. Then, they went to the polling stations and voted for him. There was, after all, little real alternative among the opposition.

¶15. (C) There was, in fact, a sign that many voters considered as an alternative to Wade the man, Idrissa Seck, whom Wade had mentored for over a decade. Seck took the vote of old Wade loyalists who resented Wade's granting of power to Socialist defectors and left them jobless and powerless. Seck also competed with Wade, apparently, for the youth vote, as a symbol of change, modernization and, much more than Wade, of Senegal's incorporation in the global economy. Left behind was the Socialist Tanor, a reformer in the context of his party, but the personification for the average voter of managerial sclerosis and lack of imagination.

¶16. (C) Voters will be looking for Wade's changes in government as proof of what he intends. Will he choose a woman, his old friend and supporter and sometime Seck ally Aminata Tall, to replace the lowly regarded technocrat and successful campaign manager Macky Sall? Will he choose less combative Interior and Justice ministers now that the election is over? Will there be further progress in Wade's personal and political reconciliation with Seck? Will there be new appointments to oversee the moribund Casamance peace process? Voters will want action as soon as possible.

¶17. (C) With the votes tallied in all but three departments, a first-round victory looks more probable. International and national observers shared the same impressions as the 52 U.S. mission observers that in spite of logistical problems, the elections were free, fair and met international standards.
END COMMENT.

¶18. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar,s classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.
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